United Nations

A/72/488

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 September 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Agenda item 15
Culture of peace

Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report describes the activities undertaken by the main United Nations entities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue in implementation of General Assembly resolutions 71/249 and 71/252, highlighting new trends and approaches and suggesting future avenues for work in this area.

17-16449 (E) 280917

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/249, on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, and 71/252, on the follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

2. In the period from May 2016 to April 2017, contributing United Nations entities consolidated and expanded their efforts to foster a culture of peace and dialogue, together and with other partners, in a field that has grown substantially in significance and scope with the United Nations renewed emphasis on conflict and crisis prevention. The groundwork for this strategic shift was laid in 2016 when the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted parallel resolutions concerning sustaining peace, in which they called for "inclusive dialogue and mediation" as part of a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)). It is also stated in the resolutions that peacebuilding is an inherently political process that encompasses a wide range of political, developmental and human rights programmes and mechanisms. The United Nations focus on conflict prevention was further sharpened in June 2017 by the "Vision of the Secretary-General on prevention", with its call for a "surge in preventive diplomacy" to tackle the grave crises in the world and avert the onset of others.

3. The work of the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue has continued to gain strong impetus from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which makes numerous references to peace in its Goals, notably Goal 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. Among other messages, the 2030 Agenda advocates for the equal participation of all in efforts aimed at building and sustaining peace, and it recognizes that, for sustainable outcomes, conversations around peaceful coexistence must never stop. The Agenda's universal application to countries in the developed and developing world, its focus on partnerships and its references to Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development also create new spaces for dialogue between regions and nations.

4. The present report demonstrates amply that targeted and sustained efforts to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue are conducive to both conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a wide variety of settings. Dialogue creates the conditions for the peaceful and lasting resolution of differences, thereby contributing to preventive diplomacy. It also helps to overcome the ignorance and misunderstanding that undermine social cohesion, peace and stability in today's increasingly multicultural and interconnected world.

5. Many of the activities described in this report contribute to the United Nations efforts to combat violent extremism, the rise of which has emerged as the most significant terrorism-related challenge since the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006. The United Nations and Member States have taken steps to develop a more effective and coordinated response to that evolving threat. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (see A/70/674 and A/70/675) was adopted in February 2016; that was followed, in July 2016, by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/291 concerning the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Among its recommendations, the Assembly encouraged relevant actors to promote a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. In May 2017, the Security Council, in its resolution 2354 (2017), concerning threats

to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, welcomed the 12-point comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives proposed by the Counter-Terrorism Committee (see S/2017/375), in which specific reference is made to dialogue as an instrument to fight extremism. The Office of Counter-Terrorism was established in June 2017 to provide strategic leadership to the United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

6. As in previous years, the preparation of the present report was a collective endeavour, reflecting ongoing efforts to coordinate the work of the United Nations system in this important area. It provides an overview rather than an exhaustive list of actions, highlighting some of the major developments and stand-out activities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue in the period under review. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which coordinated and drafted the report, is also the lead United Nations agency for intercultural dialogue and for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), a significant multilateral initiative that reached its halfway point in 2017. As in 2016, the information below is presented thematically according to the major areas of the Action Plan for the Decade.

II. Promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity

7. Mutual understanding and respect for diversity in all its dimensions are vital to achieving the "peaceful and inclusive" societies that are the aim of Sustainable Development Goal 16. People and communities everywhere wish to see their cultures and backgrounds recognized and valued. In our increasingly multicultural societies, celebrating diversity as an asset for all is a significant step towards peaceful coexistence.

8. The UNESCO Unite4Heritage campaign harnesses the protection of cultural heritage as a means to promote diversity, unity, reconciliation and human security, most recently in the Middle East and Africa, through the preservation or restoration of sites that have been targeted by those who wish to obliterate the cultures, religions and identities of others. In March 2017, in a groundbreaking development led by UNESCO, the Security Council adopted resolution 2347 (2017), in which it recognized the importance of cultural heritage for peace and security and affirmed that the deliberate destruction of heritage may constitute a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. To enhance the work it does on the ground, in June 2016, UNESCO hosted a conference on the theme "Cultural diversity under attack: protecting heritage for peace" in Brussels, which brought together more than 300 professionals and policymakers to discuss the role of culture in recovery and reconciliation. Intercultural dialogue was one of eight agreed areas of action.

9. Culture can also serve as a soft power tool to promote reciprocal knowledge and dialogue between nations in institutional settings. Around 25,000 people discovered the cultural diversity and artistic treasures of United Nations Member States thanks to the cultural activities programme of the United Nations Library at Geneva in 2016. In September 2016, the exhibition "Razza umana" (Human race) presented portraits by the Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani, showcasing the diversity of human morphology and highlighting the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to combat discrimination.

10. The need for greater tolerance and understanding is growing in our increasingly multicultural cities. The first UNESCO Global Report on Culture for

Sustainable Urban Development, entitled "Culture: urban future", which was launched at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito in 2016, stresses that cities are shaped by all who live in them. The report states that for societies to be peaceful and tolerant, cities need to safeguard the identity of all residents and take steps to ensure that all feel safe and included. It recommends that culture should be a core component of urban initiatives to facilitate social cohesion and mutual understanding, to counter violence and contribute to peacebuilding. In the light of the evolving make-up of city populations, the report also recommends that decision makers adopt policies that recognize and promote cultural diversity as an asset for social inclusion.

11. Religious and community leaders can use their influence to promote tolerance and understanding. Amplifying a trend observed in the previous report, in 2016/17 United Nations entities increasingly engaged with this constituency in their work to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) signed a partnership with Religions for Peace on "Faith over Fear", a campaign that encourages religious people of all denominations to publicly commit to welcoming refugees into their communities. The campaign complements other work that UNICEF is engaged in with faith-based and secular organizations, such as its ongoing Refugees Welcome to Dinner campaign, which encourages citizens around the world to share a meal and forge social connections with refugees and asylum seekers.

Religious tourism to promote mutual understanding

Religious tourism, one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, offers another avenue to promote mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that 300 million tourists visit the world's major religious sites each year and that 600 million national and international religious journeys are taken annually all over the world, offering enormous potential to foster a culture of peace by promoting values common to all religions. UNWTO is currently developing a network of religious tourism in the Middle East that aims to promote the common heritage of the three monotheistic religions in the region and increase cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding. To explore this theme further, the Organization held a Conference on Religious Heritage and Tourism in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in October 2016. Participants discussed how tourism departments, heritage organizations and local communities can develop the social and economic impact of religious heritage tourism.

12. The Silk Roads have connected civilizations and brought peoples and cultures from across the world into contact with one another for thousands of years, permitting not only an exchange of goods but also the interaction of ideas and cultures that have shaped our world today. In the light of this enduring legacy, the UNESCO Silk Road Online Platform has revived and extended those historic networks virtually and furthered reciprocal knowledge of cultural identities by mapping the exchange of cultural experiences, ideas and values through art, trade and migration. An interactive atlas of cultural interactions along the Silk Roads is being prepared with the assistance of the Silk Roads network of focal points in 25 Member States.

13. Similarly, the landmark UNESCO General History of Africa series of publications has helped to promote greater knowledge and understanding of Africa's often overlooked contribution to the development of humanity. In a major initiative

that ensures that this knowledge is shared with audiences all over the world, with private sector support the collection has been turned into a BBC World Service television documentary series. A second phase of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue also forged ahead with a number of projects including the publication "Writing peace" and the "Muslim-Arab legacy to the West" online digital library and pedagogical exhibition.

14. Social media, with their massive reach and interactivity, can also be harnessed to engage dialogue with global audiences around a positive message of diversity. UNESCO as the lead agency and other United Nations partners designed a social media campaign that gave International Mother Language Day, on 21 February 2017, greater visibility than ever before, particularly in Spanish-speaking countries. Messages on the day were among Facebook's and Twitter's top 10 posts of the month, boosted, notably, by the use of a dedicated hashtag for English, French and Spanish celebrations of the Day, as well as strong visuals.

III. Supporting reconciliation and peace efforts through dialogue

15. In the period under review, the United Nations allocated a budget of $7.87 billion for peacekeeping operations. Globally, violence cost the world $14.3 trillion in purchasing power parity in 2016, around 12.6 per cent of global GDP or $1,953 per person, according to estimates in the Global Peace Index. The situation of the 10 least peaceful countries in the world was far worse: there the economic impact of conflict was equivalent to 37 per cent of GDP. Faced with overwhelming evidence that long-established methods of dealing with conflict have been failing, however much money is spent, the United Nations has been increasingly shifting its focus to prevention, an approach that places dialogue for reconciliation and peace at the front and centre of our efforts to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

16. As outlined in the vision of the Secretary-General on prevention, the United Nations new "surge in preventive diplomacy" is predicated upon the recognition that wars can be ended only by the actions of the parties directly involved and their supporters to forge political solutions and tackle the root causes. The United Nations must also make concerted efforts to prevent new conflicts by promptly identifying and responding to early signs of tension. To make prevention effective, dialogue towards peace needs to be comprehensive, paying attention to the local, national, regional and international levels, and ensuring accountability. The examples in the present report show that United Nations entities involved in supporting peace efforts through dialogue are already applying these notions as they pursue their work.

17. All over the world, women play a decisive role in reconciliation and sustaining peace. However, although advances have been made, more than a decade and a half after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), too few women are still formally involved in peace processes. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continues to lead efforts in this key area. In Colombia, its work to strengthen the capacity of women activists and civil society and its collaboration with the authorities ensured that women participated in all stages of the planning, negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. Women represented up to one third of participants in the country's peace talks, approximately half the participants in consultations, and accounted for more than 60 per cent of the victims and experts at the peace table. The peace agreement that followed contained 100 gender-responsive provisions whose implementation is

being supported by UN-Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Women's active participation in post-conflict architecture and project development in Colombia will be decisive for sustaining the country's groundbreaking achievements. Through the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, UN-Women is now leading efforts to bridge the funding gap for women-centred peacebuilding in Colombia.

Inclusive dialogue for locally owned peace outcomes in Yemen

A key component of prevention is the participation of a broad array of actors to ensure national or local ownership of sustainable peace efforts, a principle the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) applies to its work to build insider mediation capacities and national infrastructures for peace. In Yemen, where it works closely with humanitarian partners in areas ranging from emergency needs to resilience-building, across parts of the country where active combat has ceased UNDP has been pursuing development action to diminish the risk of a return to conflict or radicalization of the country's large youth population. As with similarly focused projects in Guatemala, Malawi and Togo, UNDP has been helping to build social cohesion and trust through dialogue to resolve locally identified sources of tension. Mediation and arbitration have traditionally been conducted by influential figures such as sheikhs or religious leaders in Yemen However, communities have responded positively to opportunities for dialogue through which they have been able to constructively address their issues and concerns. By enhancing insider mediation and the capacity of civil society organizations to design and implement dialogue processes, UNDP is building capacity for conflict resolution as well as fostering cooperative relations in local communities.

18. UN-Women has also been promoting more gender-responsive peacebuilding in the Philippines. It conducted a mapping exercise that involved 614 women leaders and 104 civil society groups in the capacities of key organizations to engage in the peace process. UN-Women subsequently facilitated a data validation workshop that provided an important space for women and other stakeholders to voice concerns about the peace process and to gain greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges to participating in public life.

19. In Burundi, a network of more than 500 women community peace mediators, established by UN-Women with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, continued to ease the tensions that erupted in Burundi in 2015, more than a decade after the civil war. The women's role in conflict prevention serves as a model of the upstream peace work the United Nations is pursuing. The Peacebuilding Fund has worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNESCO in Burundi, one of 25 countries in which it has financed more than 400 projects in recent years.

20. Strengthening the role of youth in peacebuilding is also a priority for the United Nations, an agenda with which the entities cited in this report are deeply engaged. In the period under review, the Youth Solidarity Fund of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations provided grants and technical support to 11 youth-led organizations around the world, working through local partners to prevent conflict and promote peace and social inclusion. In Nigeria, it helped to train more than 60 young Muslims and Christians to serve as intercultural ambassadors, promoting understanding and tolerance through community events that reached

37,000 people. In the Middle East and North Africa region, it provided citizen journalism training to develop the empathy and trust of Palestinians, Israelis and others by means of online and face-to-face learning. In December 2016, the Alliance of Civilizations launched its Young Peacebuilders programme, conducting a 12-country pilot in West Africa, to help young people aged 18 to 25 to gain the skills to promote diversity and prevent violent conflict.

21. The African continent, including its youth, is one of the global priorities of UNESCO. Within the framework of promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, the flagship programme of the organization's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, 2014-2021, and as part of the Pan African Forum for a Culture of Peace in Africa-Luanda Bienniale, UNESCO held an international conference on "Prevention of violence and promotion of the culture of peace during electoral periods in Africa" in Luena, Angola, in December 2016. The conference concluded with the Angola launch of the Youth Campaign for the Culture of Peace in Central Africa, which aims to involve young people in actions to promote peace in their everyday lives.

22. Holistic, community-led recovery and peacebuilding processes are also being promoted in Africa by the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV). In cooperation with UNESCO, UN-Women, UNDP and the Government of Mali, a two-year peace education project began in five towns in northern Mali in July 2016 to promote conflict resolution, non-violence, disarmament, human rights and gender equality by fostering the participation of the region's youth, young women and girls in democratic life. Youth centres are being rehabilitated for use as workshops for capacity-building and some 40 youth groups will be created over the course of the project. UNV has also been working with United Nations partners in Burundi and Kenya to provide youth with leadership skills and training to help them serve as agents of peace in conflict-affected communities.

23. In other parts of the world, UNV has been working with women and youth volunteers to conduct locally owned evidence-based research. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNV implemented a volunteer scheme through which marginalized groups collected data on 40 indicators of extremism and peace, a methodology that promoted community dialogue and decision-making to enhance peace, cohesion and resilience. In Central America and the Caribbean, a study of the impact of volunteer networks for peace and security increased the visibility of volunteer-involving organizations and supported their community-level role in the promotion of peace, justice, dialogue and reconciliation.

A major inter-agency research project on the United Nations contribution to peace

How to end conflict and sustain peace in the world is the abiding challenge of our time. In a groundbreaking collaboration with more than 30 United Nations entities that provides insight into the question, UNESCO and the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona, Spain, have conducted a two-year research project on the United Nations system's contribution to peace over the past seven decades, recalling both its successes and failures and exploring ways forward. As well as reviewing the latest thinking from peace research on the changing nature of conflict in today's world, the project presents examples and analysis of current work by United Nations entities in conflict, post-conflict and fragile contexts that provide a counterpoint to some of the received ideas about the limitations of the United Nations system and its capacity to work "as one". The outcome of the research will be published in book form in December 2017.

24. Mediation is a central component of dialogue for conflict prevention and conflict resolution and a key element in the United Nations ongoing surge in preventive diplomacy. In the period under review, the Palais des Nations, which houses the United Nations Office at Geneva, remained the venue of choice for United Nations-led mediation processes and talks, in cooperation with the host country, Switzerland. The Office of the Director-General coordinated the work of all divisions and services that delivered "as one" in support of United Nations mediation efforts undertaken in Switzerland, such as the international discussions concerning Cyprus and the Syrian Arab Republic, including those held at Geneva. To highlight this work, on the International Day of Peace, 21 September 2016, the "Geneva Peace Talks" were organized with partner non-governmental organizations under the theme "Peace happens". Similar events were held in London, Nairobi, Ottawa and Stockholm. The third Geneva Peace Week, an event that showcased the peace activities of the United Nations and other international bodies in Geneva, was held in November 2016.

IV. Building a framework for commonly shared values to foster social cohesion

25. Dialogue provides opportunities to reinforce the shared values that unite a society and enable its members to work together for the common good. Confirming a trend noted in the previous report, United Nations entities continued to engage very strongly with religious and community leaders in this area.

26. On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development and the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, and in response to the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth session, in 2016, UN-Women launched the platform "Gender equality and religion for the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The platform explores how gender equality can be pursued through a religious lens and be implemented across an array of Sustainable Development Goals, from those dealing with eradicating poverty to health, environment and peace and security goals. In parallel, UN-Women expanded its work with men and boys on gender equality, specifically engaging faith actors. At the sixty-first session of the Commission, in March 2017, UN-Women and a group of partner religious organizations hosted an event on how men, boys and faith actors can challenge stereotypes on women's role in the workplace and in the family. On the basis of the outcomes of the event and in consultation with civil society partners, UN-Women will support the establishment of a civil society-led community of practice to promote the leadership of feminist faith actors in institutions and promote dialogue and conferences on overcoming stereotypes and achieving social transformation towards gender equality.

27. In the review period, UNFPA continued to facilitate national dialogues between traditional, religious and other stakeholders on reproductive health, women's empowerment and gender equality in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Programme includes issues such as harnessing the demographic dividend and combating gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices. As part of these efforts, UNFPA facilitated South-South experience-sharing between religious and youth leaders in Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia and Tunisia. UNFPA also addressed female genital mutilation in the Arab region through social media campaigns in which Muslim and Christian leaders from Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia and the Sudan condemned the practice and disassociated it from religion. At the country level, the ongoing partnerships of

UNFPA country offices with faith-based and civil society organizations in Africa, Asia and South America and the Caribbean also fostered social cohesion around issues such as sexual and reproductive health and family planning.

28. In a major development that can advance the United Nations conflict prevention objectives, two years of dialogue between religious and community leaders from faith groups in 77 countries culminated in the launch of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. The Plan was the outcome of a consultation conducted by the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect that involved 232 religious and community leaders, 30 per cent of whom were women. Intended primarily for religious leaders and actors, the Plan calls for the strengthening of interfaith alliances and networks, and the promotion of stronger relationships between religious communities. It also includes detailed recommendations for States, secular civil society organizations and the media, and contains an early-warning component for the identification of causes and sources of violence. The Plan's recommendations are relevant to a range of situations and deal with matters such as the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, violent extremism, conflict and other forms of violence.

29. Interreligious dialogue for social cohesion can also promote inclusive societies that "leave no one behind", a key pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The office of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, which is supported by OHCHR, organized a conference on freedom of religion or belief and sexuality in Geneva in June 2016. The event explored resistance, obstacles and conflicts that exist in allegedly contradictory human rights such as the right to freedom of religion or belief and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Also in the reporting period, a workshop on religion and religious freedom in international diplomacy examined the use of religion in foreign policy, development and humanitarian aid, and considered ways of advancing religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief.

Dialogue to promote shared values on the rights of children

In 2016 UNICEF successfully engaged with religious leaders all over the world to promote child protection. After consultations with 235 theologians and experts as well as 144 children in six countries, the Fund and the World Council of Churches signed the global agreement on a programme entitled "Churches' commitments to children: churches uniting for children in the pilgrimage of justice and peace". The agreement, which was communicated to the 348 member Churches and ecumenical partners of the World Council of Churches in 120 countries in March 2017, calls for the promotion of child protection through church communities; meaningful participation by children and adolescents in church life and society; and the promotion by churches of intergenerational climate justice, with support for initiatives for and with children and adolescents. Explicit mention is made of targets of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending violence against children, welcoming and supporting refugees and migrants, and addressing actions to mitigate and prepare for climate change. UNICEF country offices also engaged with religious leaders and faith-based organizations. UNICEF Egypt and partner organizations jointly launched three publications on Islamic and Christian perspectives on protecting children from violence and harmful practices. The publication entitled "Peace. Love. Tolerance. Key messages from Islam and Christianity on protecting children from violence and harmful practices" (2016), provides guidance for parents, caregivers, teachers and religious leaders on avoiding

forms of violence and harmful practices faced by children: child and forced marriage; female genital mutilation; discrimination; child labour; sexual abuse; absence of family care and homelessness; domestic violence; violence in schools and educational institutions; children in armed conflict; child trafficking; and violence against children on television and the Internet. UNICEF also pursued its partnerships with faith organizations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The partnerships, which played a critical role during the Ebola response, focused in the reporting period on strengthening technical and institutional capacity to prevent harmful practices, violence and abuse against children.

30. The United Nations Office at Geneva also harnessed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an opportunity for dialogue with the religious community, holding constructive discussions with the office of the Pope in the Holy See on how to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals through local churches worldwide. The Office hosted an executive briefing to Member States in Geneva by Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, on the Holy See's perspectives on the 2030 Agenda and the concept of "integral human development". To further engage with religious communities, an interfaith summit on the Sustainable Development Goals was held in the Palais des Nations during World Interfaith Harmony Week in February 2017.

31. The humanities, at their core, are the collection of disciplines which allow us to understand human culture, that is the ideas, norms and behaviours that make us human. In an era of growing global conflict and tension, the humanities can help societies to critically make sense of those aspects that we have in common, providing the basis for fruitful intercultural dialogue as a mechanism to sustain peace and development. The World Humanities Conference, planned and prepared during the reporting period by UNESCO, the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences and the World Humanities Conference-Liège 2017 Foundation, gathered some 1,000 participants in Liège, Belgium, in August 2017, building on consultation meetings in each region, to reflect on the role and responsibilities for the humanities in facing contemporary challenges and advancing the ambitious 2030 Agenda. In this context, in the outcome document of the Conference it was noted that it had taken place during the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), thereby further strengthening its substantive intellectual and institutional support to the realization of the Decade's objectives.

32. Among the numerous international days celebrated across the United Nations, many promote shared values by inviting societies to learn from the past and build a more diverse and tolerant world in the future. Key commemorations of this kind that the United Nations Office at Geneva highlighted in the period under review included Holocaust Remembrance Day; World Humanitarian Day; the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda; the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers; the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade; and the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

V. Disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural and interreligious dialogue through quality education and the media

33. At a time when the global migration trend and other factors are bringing people of different backgrounds and religions into ever closer contact, accompanied

by a corresponding rise in divisive political populism and violent extremism, equipping the next generation with the tools of tolerance and cultural literacy is more crucial than ever. UNESCO is at the forefront of efforts to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue in education, notably through its Global Citizenship Education initiative. The focus of this work has sharpened since UNESCO became lead United Nations agency for education for the prevention of violent extremism in implementation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Addressing the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism in New York in September 2016, the Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, described education for the prevention of violent extremism as "the new front line for hearts and minds".

34. As part of an ongoing drive to build crucial momentum on education for the prevention of violent extremism among policymakers, UNESCO produced "Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policymakers" (2017), on the development of inclusive and non-discriminatory education policies. In the review period, local and regional capacity-building initiatives took place in Addis Ababa, Almaty, Dakar and Johannesburg. More than 200 education policymakers, experts and youth advocates from nearly 70 countries came together to seek a common understanding of education for the prevention of violent extremism at the first UNESCO International Conference on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education: Taking Action, held in New Delhi in September 2016. Teachers and other practitioners from around the world attended the Third UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: the role of teachers, in Ottawa in March 2017.

35. In a world in which media and social media are ever more powerful vectors for shaping public opinion, the work of UNESCO on freedom of expression, press freedom and media and information literacy also plays an essential role in fostering dialogue for mutual understanding. Awareness of these issues was raised during the annual Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue Week, 30 October to 6 November 2016, whose highlight was the international conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil. In 2016, UNESCO took further steps to advance its media and information literacy curriculum, adapting it as an interreligious training resource in cooperation with the Vienna-based King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. Piloting of the UNESCO media and information literacy curriculum for teachers is under way at six universities in Nigeria. The organization also launched a global survey on youth perspectives on media, interreligious dialogue and online hate, and radical and extremist content. More than 2,000 young people from over 100 countries participated in the survey.

36. In an ongoing project that targets both media production and media consumption, UNESCO is developing an international network of "interculturally competent" and media literate young journalists and researchers in collaboration with partner organizations in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Yemen and other countries in the Arab region. Through capacity-building by more experienced professionals, the network seeks to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enhance participants' ability to report fairly and contribute to a culture of peace.

Promoting inclusion through film

Creative media are also a powerful tool for dialogue. The annual Plural + youth video festival, a joint initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration, held in New York in November, encourages young people from all over the world to share their creative vision through short videos on topics such as migration, diversity and social inclusion. The 2017 edition of the event includes a new award, for the prevention of xenophobia. Winning videos have been screened in dozens of festivals, and cinemas, and broadcast on television networks throughout the world.

37. In the reporting period, the Department of Public Information worked at the global, regional and local levels to promote peace and mutual understanding via its multimedia platforms in six official United Nations languages, Kiswahili and Portuguese, and through its 59 active United Nations Information Centres, which reach out to local populations through local languages. Spreading the values of mutual understanding and diversity, to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), the Department promoted knowledge of, and respect for, the contributions of people of African descent to societies, through special events and multimedia material. The Department also participates in the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development. As part of its Focus on Faith series, the Department organized a briefing for non-governmental organizations on "Finding a new home: the role of faith-based organizations in refugee assistance and refugee resettlement work".

38. The Department's network of United Nations Information Centres supported an array of campaigns and commemorated international days and observances that promote a culture of peace and mutual understanding. For example, as part of the "Together" campaign to promote respect and dignity for refugees and migrants, the Centre in Canberra produced a video series featuring the personal stories of those who have successfully rebuilt their lives in Australia. In the lead-up to the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 2018, the Department has launched a video campaign encouraging people around the world to record themselves reading an article of the Universal Declaration in their native language.

39. In the reporting period, the United Nations Office at Geneva promoted United Nations campaigns and disseminated key declarations by United Nations officials and others on issues that include the promotion of cultures, religions and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The Office's social media accounts reach millions of people annually: cumulatively, the United Nations Geneva Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts had 423,700 followers as of May 2017. The Office contributed to changing the negative narrative on migrants and refugees through its promotion of the "Together" campaign on respect, safety and dignity for all, as well as hosting the launch of the OHCHR "Stand up for someone's rights" campaign.

VI. Fostering dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, religious, social and cultural dimensions

40. The World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, organized by the Government of Azerbaijan in cooperation with UNESCO, the Alliance of Civilizations, UNWTO, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization, has established itself as a key global platform for promoting intercultural dialogue. The fourth biennial Forum, on the theme "Advancing intercultural dialogue: new avenues for human security, peace and sustainable development", held in Baku early in May 2017, hosted more participants, events and sessions than any previous edition, while its high-level dimension was enhanced by a high-level meeting on countering violent extremism through girls' education and a ministerial meeting. During the two-day event, around 800 stakeholders from more than 120 countries discussed sharing resources, knowledge and experience, opening up new avenues for joint thinking and action towards the aspirations of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, Sustainable Development Goal 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, and the Baku Process, which has been at the forefront of advocating for dialogue among cultures since 2008.

41. Scientific cooperation has long brought peoples and cultures together, a message that is underlined every year on World Science Day for Peace and Development, which will be celebrated in November 2017 during the biennial World Science Forum in Jordan. An inspiring example of such cooperation can be found in the SESAME (Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East) International Research Centre that opened in Amman in 2017, with support from UNESCO. The organization also fosters inclusive dialogue between those who hold precious local and indigenous knowledge and the scientific community, notably on climate change adaptation and sustainable development, through its Local and Indigenous Knowledge System (LINKS). Workshops were scheduled in six African countries in the period under review, while an Indigenous Knowledge Day was organized during the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakesh in November 2016.

42. The comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also extends its reach to the maritime environment: Goal 14 concerns itself with conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and maritime resources, while the target under Goal 16 on preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime also has relevance for maritime security. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) fosters dialogue on maritime security and the marine environment to promote "safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans". In 2016 IMO encouraged dialogue around these themes on World Maritime Day, calling for a holistic interagency approach to address the whole range of issues concerning the maritime environment. The annual Day of the Seafarer also provided a platform for seafarers and maritime personnel to share their experiences with the general public and raise awareness of the value and importance of maritime transport.

43. Interventions that promote food security and access to natural resources can also be used to foster dialogue, while helping to advance Goal 1 on poverty, Goal 2 on food security, and the "peaceful and inclusive societies" of Goal 16. Through its work, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) strengthens social cohesion, generates peace dividends, reduces conflict drivers and builds the legitimacy and capacity of governments. The organization facilitated the re-establishment of intercommunity dialogue on land access in the contested Abyei area between the Sudan and South Sudan. In the Central African Republic, FAO supported the stabilization process to end the conflict between the Muslim ex-Séléka and Christian anti-Balaka movements; eased historical tensions between the country's pastoralists and farmers; and lowered the risk of vulnerable groups joining militias through agriculture projects to promote the economic inclusion of youth. The organization has also helped to build the resilience to natural disasters of rival Muslim and Buddhist communities in conflict-affected Rakhine State,

Myanmar, carrying out needs assessments and beneficiary identification with the participation of the communities concerned.

Promoting criminal justice and crime prevention

Dialogue that builds capacity to uphold human rights and encourages the establishment of effective and accountable institutions is a key dimension of sustainable development. An example is the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in criminal justice and crime prevention, through which the Office helps Member States to integrate into their policies and programmes issues such as employment, education, health and urban planning. Among other activities in this area, UNODC continued to promote peace, tolerance and understanding through sport for crime prevention among at-risk youth, launching pilot activities in Brazil, Kyrgyzstan and South Africa. Further to the adoption by United Nations Member States in 2015 of the Doha Declaration on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider United Nations Agenda to Address Social and Economic Challenges and to Promote the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, and Public Participation, which emphasizes education for children and youth to prevent crime and corruption, UNODC launched the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative to foster a culture of lawfulness among children and youth and to increase both their expectations and their future contribution to fair, transparent and accountable institutions. The Office also assisted countries in the Sahel region and the Middle East and North Africa on criminal justice related to the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Activities such as this also fulfil the UNODC mandate on terrorism prevention, through which it delivers 50 per cent of the projects under the capacity-building pillar of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as contributing to implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism on strengthening and promoting the rule of law and human rights. UNODC also partners with OHCHR in capacity-building on gender aspects of the investigation of terrorism offences.

44. UNFPA fosters dialogue for sustainable development through its capacity-building support for culturally sensitive and gender-responsive national action plans. In the period under review, UNFPA collaborated with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and UN-Women to improve access to justice for women survivors of violence. It also leads an information-sharing platform with other stakeholders on scaling up the prevention of gender-based violence and female genital mutilation. In the period under review, UNFPA worked with the Government and Islamic organizations in Indonesia and Myanmar on Islamic practices that support family planning. In Honduras and Nicaragua, it supported the establishment of round tables for indigenous and Afro-descendant youth on making sexual and reproductive health care more culturally acceptable and youth- and adolescent-friendly, processes that led to the development of national plans to prevent early pregnancy. UNFPA also played a key role in developing the five-year national strategy against domestic violence in Kosovo and helped Kosovo to organize its Sixteen Days of Activism against gender-based violence, whose prevention message reached around 50,000 people.

45. With its emphasis on targeting the drivers of violent extremism, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (see A/70/674 and A/70/675) provides further scope for, and is strengthened by the holistic promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The Plan, whose

implementation is coordinated by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, confirms that preventing violent extremism is the responsibility of Member States under the Charter of the United Nations and other human rights instruments. In the reporting period, United Nations entities that are members of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force helped Member States to improve existing programmes to tackle the drivers of violent extremism and introduce new initiatives to close gaps. They also worked through an "all-of-United Nations" approach to help national, regional and international organizations to develop plans to prevent violent extremism. The involvement of civil society, religious groups, various government actors, youth, families, women, the media, the private sector, and cultural and educational leaders has been encouraged to ensure broad and inclusive ownership of plans to prevent violent extremism.

46. The UNDP global programme on the prevention of violent extremism, which was adopted in March 2016, both responds to immediate needs that arise from violent extremism and also addresses its root causes. Globally the programme aims at strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law; providing socioeconomic opportunities; strengthening the participation of women, youth and other excluded groups in decision-making; prevention and mediation; and promoting inclusion and tolerance. In the Lake Chad Basin countries, UNDP is strengthening early recovery efforts of women and youth in the far north of Cameroon; strengthening community security and resilience in Diffa, the Niger; and preventing radicalization in north-eastern Nigeria and Chad, where it is engaging women and youth through sport and institutional capacity-building. In Kosovo, UNDP undertook research and baseline assessment on countering violent radicalization and it collected gender disaggregated data on returned foreign fighters. UNDP is also currently conducting groundbreaking research on the spread of violent extremism in prisons, based on exchanges with former terrorist fighters who were imprisoned after their return from ISIL-held territories, as well as with their families and communities.

47. If given appropriate opportunities to make a positive contribution, the world's fast-growing youth population will be instrumental in achieving sustainable development. Over the past three years, the Networks of Mediterranean Youth project (2014-2017), implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union, has empowered more than 4,000 young women and men from 10 Mediterranean countries, enhancing their mobilization on challenges related to democracy, peacebuilding and regional dialogue. The project has reinforced their policy analysis and dialogue skills, their representation in mainstream media and their employability. Over 20 North-South-South exchanges and intercultural interactions also brought youth, policymakers and media professionals together to build consensus on reconciliation, peace and the youth agenda at the regional level.

48. In this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the World Tourism Organization has been raising awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism for economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental and cultural preservation. Its "Travel, enjoy, respect" campaign focuses on increasing awareness among tourists that they are contributing to sustainable development. The manual "Tips for a responsible traveller" was produced as part of the campaign and is based on ideas from the World Committee on Tourism Ethics. The tips include advice such as honouring your hosts and common heritage and being an informed and respectful traveller. It invites travellers to learn more about their destination and the local population in order to gain understanding and cultural sensitivity. UNWTO also promotes the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socioeconomic impact and minimize negative effects, while helping to

achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development, peace and mutual understanding.

VII. Conclusion

49. The United Nations focus on prevention has introduced a new dynamic that has made the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue increasingly the business of the entire United Nations system. As this report illustrates, action in this area is being implemented in an ever wider array of settings with multiple new actors, including more United Nations development entities, as awareness continues to grow of dialogue's capacity to facilitate positive outcomes and, by its very nature, promote inclusivity. Through these efforts, the entities concerned are helping to lay the groundwork for the United Nations "surge in preventive diplomacy", which calls for the strengthening of mediation and facilitation capacities in the broadest terms, and at all levels, as part of a comprehensive dialogue towards peace.

50. A strong current of human rights runs through the work described in this report, which resonates with the United Nations focus on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as well as with its efforts to combat terrorism. Among other trends that can be observed, the report confirms that the United Nations system is engaged increasingly with religious and other civil society groups, particularly through dialogue that fosters shared values to strengthen social cohesion. Dialogue for capacity-building and to promote resilience is another recurrent theme, notably through activities that develop peacebuilding and other skills among women and youth. This inclusivity goes to the heart of the pledge in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to "leave no one behind".

51. Diverse constituencies were not only the targets but increasingly the agents of action to promote a culture of peace in the period under review. This broader, "bottom-up" participation of stakeholders in the design and implementation of initiatives is conducive to the sustainability of those efforts over time across all areas of the United Nations work. For example, the comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives, adopted by the Security Council in 2017, points out that vulnerable young people are more likely to be convinced by the viewpoints of peers and role models than by official statements.

52. Future action to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue can only benefit from an enhanced emphasis on the broad participation of different stakeholders in all areas and at all levels of society. Among tools the United Nations system will have at its disposal to pursue this "people-centred approach", the forthcoming global progress report on youth, peace and security, currently being coordinated by a joint UNFPA/Peacebuilding Support Office secretariat, will provide new avenues to promote youth engagement in peace.

53. There is growing awareness across the United Nations system that dialogue creates an enabling environment for the peaceful pursuit of broader development goals. Further effort to apply an interreligious and intercultural dialogue "lens" to activities that have other principal objectives will add value by contributing to conflict prevention and peacebuilding across the spectrum of the United Nations work. By the same token, with the commitment of the whole of the United Nations system, Member States and partners, concrete action to address genuine grievances, notably the root causes of conflict, such as inequality, sectarian divides, poor governance, marginalization and exclusion, can transform the goodwill and renewed hope that dialogue generates into an enduring "culture of peace".